

18 February 1955

MEMORANDUM FOR: Mr. Pforzheimer

SUBJECT: Draft Bill "To Provide for the Conferring of an Award to be Known as the United States Medal of Merit"

1. In reply to your note of 14 February the following observations are offered in respect to the proposed legislation to create a United States Medal of Merit.

a. The creation of an additional United States decoration to be conferred by the President detracts in some measure from other United States awards of a similar level. While it is not possible to gauge the diminution, certainly the Congressional Medal of Honor and the National Security Medal are affected to a greater or lesser degree.

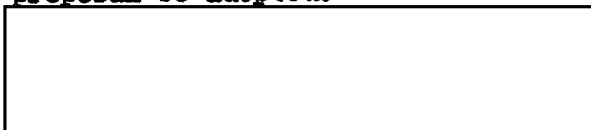
b. While the proposed legislation states that the purpose of the award is to "foster those cultural qualities and innovations essential to the development of a high civilization and conducive to the maintenance of peace, which are of paramount importance to humanity at all times," the legislation fails to disclose a need for a decoration to achieve this purpose. In other words, an award is being proposed but no mention is made of dissatisfactions or disappointment arising from the lack of such an award. In many of the fields referred to, recognition is provided by foundations, professional organizations, unions and other associations; it may well be that these forms of recognition are sufficient.

c. The creation of an award to recognize accomplishments in the fields referred to would contribute to the already confused state of non-military Federally sponsored awards. At the present time the military services possess a reasonably consistent system of awards under the general supervision of the Department of Defense. Unfortunately no such parallel exists in the civilian agencies of government; hence each agency creates awards for its own purposes without regard to, or comparison with, the awards that are employed by other agencies. It would appear more logical to review non-military United States awards for the purpose of creating a recognizable system rather than to add another award which does not appear to fit into any system.

d. In the event that the proposed award is approved by Congress, it would appear unnecessary to pay members of the board for their services. In all likelihood such a board, if created, would include one or more senior government officials already receiving salaries from the government. It is noted that members of the Commission of Fine Arts, the American Battle Monuments Commission and various

loyalty boards serve without compensation, an example which could be followed in the present case.

e. An Act of Congress passed on 20 July 1942 established the Medal for Merit for award by the President upon recommendation of a board constituted for that purpose. The Medal for Merit was for award to civilians for exceptionally meritorious conduct in performance of outstanding services in furtherance of the war efforts of the United States and the United Nations. The Medal for Merit authority still exists although no recommendations have been made to the President since 30 June 1947. Since the name selected for the proposed decoration practically duplicates the name of an already existing United States decoration, a new title will be required should this proposal be adopted.



Chairman, CIA Honor Awards Board

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